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Supplement—China on Need for Proletarian Dictatorship in Socialist Stage



TRENDS

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S U P P L E M E N T

CHINA ON NEED FOR PROLETARIAN DICTATORSHIP IN SOCIALIST STAGE

Confidential

14 FEBRUARY 1975
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CHINA ON NEED FOR PROLETARIAN DICTATORSHIP IN SOCIALIST STAGE

In the wake of the Fourth National People's Congress (NPC), held last month, a spate of authoritative Peking comment is now stressing the importance of making strong central party control the focal point of the anti-Lin Biao, anti-Confucius campaign. In the first central editorial on domestic policy since the NPC, PEOPLE'S DAILY on 9 February cited an "important instruction" issued by Mao Tse-tung "recently" which calls for a major study campaign to make known to the "whole nation" the need for proletarian dictatorship over the bourgeoisie. A followup article appeared in the PEOPLE'S DAILY the next day. Earlier, on 29 January Peking radio's broadcast of the table of contents of the theoretical journal RED FLAG stated that in addition to the NPC documents it contained a "special column" of four articles on dictatorship of the proletariat. Three of the articles have subsequently been carried by Peking radio or NCNA.

The current articles discuss socialism as a transitional phase between capitalism and communism, warning that during this stage class struggle will be intense, necessitating strong central party control to prevent backsliding. While PRC media have normally avoided any discussion of communism, presumably it now was felt necessary to stress the communist goal in view of China's having been designated as a socialist state in the new PRC constitution. In his NPC report on the constitution, Chang Chun-chiao had noted that constitutional provisions for private plots provided "the necessary flexibility" for the socialist stage, but warned that the leadership of some enterprises in the state sector have only the "form" of socialism; that in reality "their leadership is not in the hands of Marxists and the masses of workers."

Chang's remarks and the current articles point up the problems of the Chinese authorities in striking the proper balance between advancing toward communism and maintaining economic production. Some of the specific problems alluded to in the articles include narrowing wage differences between workers and peasants, which might make workers dissatisfied; gradual restrictions on agricultural private plots and change in level of distribution, which will anger the peasants; and continuation of the policy of sending youth to the countryside, long a factor in creating dissension in both urban and rural areas. The new shift in the ideological campaign seems designed to insure that the populace recognizes the authority of the central party apparatus to enforce directives, whether popular or not.

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The PEOPLE'S DAILY editorial on 9 February characterized the socialist period as one of "struggle between moribund capitalism and nascent communism" and noted that during this stage capitalism emerges on a widespread basis "among a section of the workers and a section of the party members. Both within the ranks of the proletariat and office workers there are people who follow the bourgeois style of life." It stressed the need for strong central control to restrict "bourgeois rights," which inevitably remain during the socialist stage, and warned that even "some of our comrades" regard "certain capitalist stuff as socialist." The editorial called on party committees at all levels and the masses to join in a study campaign on the theory of proletarian dictatorship. Party committees were told to focus on this "key question" in their study of the documents of the Fourth NPC.

An article by major commentator Liang Hsiao in PEOPLE'S DAILY on the 10th further explained the concept of bourgeois rights, described past measures taken by the party to restrict these rights, and paid special attention to continued efforts to "instill socialist ideas into the peasants." According to Liang, bourgeois rights include such practices as monetary exchange for goods and services, and continued differences in income between workers and peasants and between mental and manual labor. As an example of correct measures for restricting these rights, Liang cited the party's support for "new socialist things," a code phrase for reforms produced by the cultural revolution. Among the new things cited by Liang as examples of party restrictions on bourgeois rights were the narrowing of wage differentials, cadre participation in labor, and the program for sending educated youths to the countryside. Liang also cautioned that the "socialist principle" embodied in the new constitution--"he who does not work, neither shall he eat" and "from each according to his ability, and to each according to his work"--is transitional. Liang stated that "while we still have to practice" this principle, "it is not a communist principle" and will eventually be abolished, and he warned that ultimately to reach the communist ideal, "the proletariat must carry out the most radical rupture with traditional property relations."

Liang adopted an unhurried view on the time required for cleansing society of capitalist impurities, however. Arguing that socialist society "cannot all at once and completely get rid of the traditions and birthmarks of capitalism," Liang stressed that "to sweep up this garbage still takes time," and he called for patient and meticulous ideological-political work to criticize capitalist tendencies, especially among the peasants.

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A RED FLAG article by Lu Yang, broadcast by Peking radio on 6 February, echoed propaganda in recent months in reflecting a strong desire to insulate the economy from the effects of political dislocations, which have apparently affected industrial production in some areas. Lu called for suppression of those who "resist the socialist transformation" and stated that they would not be allowed to "be unruly in word or deed." He cited the need to maintain "public order" and exercise dictatorship over those who "seriously disrupt public order." The article called for strengthening "the state machine" and warned readers never to "allow democracy to oppose centralism or confuse proletarian democracy with bourgeois democracy"--for people's democracy "has a highly centralized leadership." Like Liang, Lu showed no urgency about pressing restrictions on bourgeois rights, stating that "we must gradually" reduce economic differences caused by bourgeois rights "to the extent possible."

A RED FLAG article by Chou Szu, carried by the NCNA domestic service on 9 February, raised an additional theme in calling for study of a Lenin work on proletarian dictatorship which praised the principle of "communist Saturday voluntary labor." According to RED FLAG, such voluntary labor was the "first concrete step" by Soviet workers in the march toward communism. While stopping short of urging actual adoption of a voluntary labor system in China, the article quoted Lenin as saying that "communist things only begin to come into being when Saturday voluntary labor emerges." And it recalled that Mensheviks jeered at Lenin's labor plan and stated that "the struggle on this question in our party is also very acute."

While the program was "voluntary," it was not a relatively uncontrolled mass movement from below as was the Chinese leap forward. Chou Szu noted that Lenin specified that such voluntary labor was not "neighborly help" but "large-scale and organized labor to meet the needs of the whole country without remuneration." In line with this controlled mass labor plan, Chou Szu took a strong position in favor of proletarian dictatorship, asking why unity, organization, and discipline are sometimes disrupted and attacked and stating that "in daily work, we must work hard and consciously observe proletarian discipline." He made a special call for persons working in "state organs" to overcome bourgeois tendencies. In a seemingly pointed message to CCP members, the commentator also recalled that after announcing the program of voluntary labor, Lenin had warned party members that they must engage in manual labor or lose their party membership.

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